

PROVIDER CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Service Providers ♦ Spring 2010

Providing Timely Services to Missouri's Children and Families

As lead agency for First Steps, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is required to submit an annual performance report to the U.S. Department of Education – Office of Special Education Programs each February. State early intervention (EI) programs are required to report on 14 indicators including measurement, data, targets and improvement activities.

Indicator No. 1 is the “Percent of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who receive the early intervention services on their IFSPs in a timely manner.” The target for this indicator is for 100 percent of infants and toddlers with an IFSP to receive services in a timely manner. All services on an IFSP must be initiated within 30 days of the service authorization start date in order for it to be considered timely. If a child has a No Provider Available (NPA) authorization, the child cannot be counted as having received timely services. NPA indicates that the service could not begin because no provider was available to provide the service.

The most recent data for First Steps indicates that 85.6 percent of children with IFSPs are

receiving services in a timely manner (according to the Key Indicators Report, March-Aug. 2009).

As a provider, what can you do to help First Steps achieve its target of 100 percent?

- When participating in an IFSP meeting, be realistic about the first time you will be able to see the child and family for services.
- Monitor your WebSPOE account frequently for the receipt of service authorizations. Let the child's service coordinator know about data entry errors or if you do not receive the authorization in a timely fashion.
- Maintain a reasonable caseload, taking into consideration travel distances and other commitments.
- Do not cancel appointments for services unless absolutely necessary.

Additional information on timely services can be found at <http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/documents/timelyservicesQAMarch2010.pdf>. Additional information about the State Performance Plan can be found at <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/documents/mo-spp-2010c.pdf>.

April Is Autism Awareness Month

A free, online training module called Understanding Autism in Young Children is now available. This module is an overview of the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and the criteria used to diagnose children. The training is hosted on the University of Missouri Extension Web site; anyone who wants to view the training will need to register for an Extension Passport and select the Understanding Autism course to view. Go to <http://thompsoncenter.missouri.edu/training/index.php> and click on the link under *Featured Trainings: Understanding Autism*. There is no charge for the passport or to view the training.

The Understanding Autism training was developed by the Mid-Missouri Rapid Response Initiative, which is funded by the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities. An online module was created from the training through a partnership with the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, University of Missouri Extension, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities' Office of Autism Services.





Writing Good Progress Reports

Each provider signs an agreement with the central finance office for First Steps; this agreement states that “the provider agrees to provide written progress reports, on a monthly basis, regarding eligible children and their services to the individual child’s Service Coordinator and the child’s family.” Progress reports can either be entered into the child’s record in WebSPOE (preferred) or sent on paper for the SPOE to include in the child’s record.

Documentation must be effective and should consider the intended audience. Since the primary audience in First Steps is the family, it is important to be respectful, use people-first language, relate comments back to performance concerns and avoid jargon.

When conducting recent compliance monitoring at the SPOE, it was discovered that many providers’ progress reports lacked the specificity and clarity needed to make a determination of compliance.

In the future, the following information should be included in your monthly progress reports:

1. Document the times and dates the EI services were provided that month.
 - **Example:** Bobby was seen for 60 minutes 4/4 times in January – 1/5, 1/12, 1/19, 1/26.
2. If EI services were missed, state the reason and indicate whether the services were made up.
 - **Example:** Sally was seen for 30 minutes 3/4 times in June – 6/7, 6/14 and 6/28 – because the provider was on vacation the week of 6/21. Services will be made up in July by adding 15 minutes to each session.

Additional resources for quality documentation practices can be found at:

- American Occupational Therapy Association: <http://www.aota.org>
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association: <http://www.asha.org>
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities: <http://www.carf.org>

WebSPOE Tip: Entering a Monthly Progress Report

1. On the child list page, click the icon in the *detail* column for a specific child record. The child detail page displays.
2. Click the *notes* tab. The case notes page displays.
3. Click the *provider progress notes* tab. The provider progress notes page displays.
4. Click *add provider progress note*. The add progress note page displays.
5. Complete the following information to create the note:
 - Outcome list (select one or more of the active outcomes available for the IFSP period)
 - Note effective date
 - Evaluation scale
 - Progress summary
 - Family/provider comments.
6. Click *save*.



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